

**SEP 14 1999**

Statement of Richard M. Moss, General Manager
Friant Water Users Authority

CalFed Hearing
Visalia, California
September 14, 1999

Good evening. Welcome to Visalia.

Given the format of tonight's public comment session and the limited amount of time each presenter is offered, there will be a number of speakers which will reference the fact that they are members of Friant Water Users Authority and are presenting comments on behalf of their district as well as the Authority. Please listen carefully to all of the presenters tonight and recognize that the breadth and number of comments you receive tonight are limited because of the format and, that at least in some cases, they are coordinated so that the collective comments of a group of water users are all sure to be heard.

The 25 member agencies of the Friant Water Users Authority provide water to one million acres of some of the most productive farmland in the world from Chowchilla Water District on the north to Arvin-Edison Water Storage District on the south. Our member agencies are directly or indirectly dependent upon the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta for most of their water supplies.

The Friant Water User Authority was deeply involved in the development of the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan and the San Joaquin River Agreement. We have also been intimately involved in the San Joaquin River Riparian Habitat Restoration and in the San Joaquin River Riparian Flow Pilot Project. All of these efforts are at the forefront of environmental restoration efforts on the San Joaquin River.

The Friant Water Users Authority has also participated in the Ag-Urban Process in an effort to stay informed on the CalFed deliberations and to coordinate our comments with the rest of the affected water community.

Thus, it can be seen that we have followed with great interest the deliberations of CalFed. We have a clear stake in the outcome of this process. We have also developed expertise as well as relationships with diverse interest groups that support our value as an agency with members interested in balanced answers that benefit the San Joaquin Valley and the State.

Let me now provide the following specific comments:

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- The Friant Water Users Authority appreciates the recognition and priority given to the need to implement the San Joaquin River Agreement (SJRA) which incorporates the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP). We endorse and adopt the specific comments that have been provided by the San Joaquin River Group Authority in a separate letter regarding the SJRA and the VAMP.
- We support CalFed's effort to move forward with the South Delta improvements to improve the conditions in that area and to increase both water supply and reliability for south-of-Delta water users.
- We believe that more emphasis and resources need to be placed on developing additional surface water storage. We look to CalFed to provide the leadership that is required to move this program along more rapidly. Additional water supplies must be developed. This is especially true for the upper San Joaquin River if river restoration actions are to be pursued in the future.
- CalFed should continue to develop viable groundwater storage and conjunctive use projects that will increase the available water supply. These studies and projects must be locally sponsored and driven.
- The need for a through Delta conveyance facility must be more seriously considered as part of the CalFed program. The current documents are vague in their description of the program. CalFed is obligated to lead this effort and must give this feature a higher priority for implementation.
- CalFed has recently supported the efforts of the Friant Water Users Authority and the Natural Resources Defense Council coalition by funding a pilot project to study the effect of flow on the dispersal and growth of willow and cottonwood trees along the mainstem of the San Joaquin River. We commend CalFed for that support and look forward to your continued support of these mutual efforts to work together to resolve our conflicts over the San Joaquin River.
- CalFed needs to include within their funding requirements over the Stage 1-timeframe, monies to continue support of pilot projects and other activities related to restoration of the upper mainstem of the San Joaquin River.
- The Mid-Valley Canal was to serve an area that encompassed the Friant Division service area and beyond. Water supplies for the Mid-Valley service area were some of the first water appropriated for environmental restoration; lost to the CVPIA and biological opinions for winter run salmon. The southern San Joaquin Valley continues to be water short and in need of additional water imports in order to arrest existing groundwater overdraft.
- We are concerned about the proposal to convert 243,000 acres of farmland for the purpose of obtaining the water that goes with it. This would have serious impacts to the local economies and would be impossible to adequately mitigate.

- The Trinity River Flow Study should be well coordinated with the CalFed process and evaluated in the CalFed EIS/EIR prior to any final decision concerning changing the current Trinity River flow regime. The Trinity flow decision should not be made until the impacts of the Trinity River Flow Study have been fully evaluated in the CalFed EIS/EIR. The information in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service flow evaluation report projects an average annual increase of 254.5 TAF in the Trinity River. That quantity of water would be foregone from the Delta. This is a significant impact to the Bay/Delta system and must be analyzed. We strongly suggest that other methods to enhance the fishery in the Trinity River be more thoroughly evaluated.

The Friant Water Users Authority will be providing more detailed comments in written testimony. Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear here this evening.